



Wisconsin E-Brief for Partnership Schools

May 2011

An e-newsletter from the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Community Learning and Partnerships Team
to promote family-school-community partnerships for children's learning

Positive Partnership Practices

These ideas come from the Wisconsin DPI VISTA and AmeriCorps volunteers working in schools, community sites, and public libraries around the state working to strengthen student learning and family-school-community partnerships. For more great ideas, read the [VISTA newsletters](#) and the [AmeriCorps newsletters](#).

Good Use for Used Books. Families and children at **Lincoln Elementary School** in Wausau can halt the summer reading slide by buying low-cost, used books at a school-sponsored Used Book Sale. School staff, families, and area businesses work together to collect as many books as possible. During the sale, students can purchase at the price of two books for 25 cents. The money raised goes back to the community. Funds have helped an area food pantry and a local pet shelter.

High School Home Visits. Milwaukee's **School for Urban Planning and Architecture (SUPAR)** made visits to students' homes to improve connections with parents. Parents who faced transportation challenges and could not easily come to meetings at the school met with four members of SUPAR's Parent Engagement and Leadership Team—the school's founder, an advisor, an AmeriCorps*VISTA member, and a paraprofessional—who carpooled to families' homes. Some teachers joined the team on its visits or talked with parents over the phone about academic topics. Discussions focused on students' strengths, how their families could support their teen's learning and development at home, and parents' questions. Parents completed a questionnaire on their strengths and talents to contribute to the school, how they could support their students and the school, and how they can be involved at school and at home. *From the NNPS Spring 2011 Type 2 newsletter:*
<http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/type2/index.htm>.

Check Out Anti-Bullying Efforts. VISTA Kathy Lewis, **Ashland High School**, decided to meet parents on their turf – at the grocery store. She spread the word to parents about the school's Creating Caring Communities anti-bullying initiative by hosting an information table at the local IGA convenience store. She met lots of parents and community members, shared important information about bullying prevention, and explained how they could be involved.

Mark Your Calendar

June 30: National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS) members should submit their annual UPDATE survey by June 30 to assess progress in developing effective family-school-community partnerships.

School, district, and organization forms are available at
http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/nmps_model/school/evaluation.htm#Update.

Five Ways to Boost Staff Buy-In for Partnerships

Ideas for using what you know and exploring possibilities for next year

1. **Survey staff members** about what worked for them this year, what they continue to need help with, and what they'd like to try next year. Try or tweak the [Look Back-Look Ahead Staff Survey](http://sites.google.com/site/dpivistaproject/resources-1/surveys)<http://sites.google.com/site/dpivistaproject/resources-1/surveys>.
2. **Explore the possibilities of hosting a VISTA in 2012-13!** VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America) members work in Wisconsin schools and districts to strengthen family-school-community partnerships. For more information, visit <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fscp/vistahmp.html>.
3. **Start a Partnership Action Team**, composed of parents and teachers, to examine what works well in involving families to improve student achievement and other school goals, and where the gaps are. Visit: <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fscp/action-team.html>.
4. **Plan a partnership panel for next fall's staff inservice.** Assemble a small group of parents and teachers willing to be on a "Parent Involvement 101" panel for next August's staff inservice session.
5. **Read up this summer.** Send teachers home for the summer with a [handout](#) listing good websites and publications on family-school-community partnerships that they can peruse over the summer.

Partnership Resource

Helping Parents Ask the Right Questions

The research may be "data-driven" – a common phrase used in education today -- but is it being used correctly to support policies that affect schools? **Parents Across America**, a grassroots organization that connects parents from across the U.S. to share ideas and work together to improve public schools, advises parents to ask a few questions next time they hear about policy changes based on data or research:

1. Where was the study published and who paid for it? Was the study published in a peer-reviewed journal? Was it supported by a particular group of funders with a political agenda?
2. What was the sample size and time period covered by the analysis?
3. If the analysis involves comparing schools, districts, methods of instruction, etc., are the comparisons appropriate? (the "apples to apples" test).
4. Where can I get a copy of the full study or studies on which a particular policy claim is based?

Learn more at <http://parentsacrossamerica.org/what-we-believe/ask-the-right-questions/>.

Wisconsin Summer Library Program Encourages Family Reading

Good reasons why families should sign children up for Summer Library Programs

Following are five good reasons for schools to encourage children and families to participate in their local 2011 Wisconsin Summer Library Program. The program:

- 1) Prevents the “summer reading slide.” By the end of 6th grade children who lose reading skills over every summer are two years behind their classmates.
- 2) Youth ages 5-17 can receive a free pass to any of the 11 Wisconsin Historical Sites or Museum.
- 3) Offers quality learning activities that are fun, safe, and affordable.
- 4) Encourages some of the best techniques identified by research as being important to the reading process.
- 5) Takes place in libraries, not schools, and encourages readers to use alternate formats such as magazines, recorded books, graphic novels, and material on the Internet, a boon for struggling readers.

Read more at <http://dpi.state.wi.us/pld/slp.html> or contact your local public library.

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The **Wisconsin E-Brief for Partnership Schools** is a monthly newsletter of news, events, research, and promising practices to keep your school, district, or organization focused and moving forward on family-school-community partnerships for children’s learning. You are receiving this e-brief because of your involvement in a partnership-related event or initiative sponsored by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI). **If you prefer NOT to receive this online newsletter, please reply to this email with the subject line: “Remove from list.”**

Your comments, ideas, and stories are vital to this newsletter. Please tell us your achievements in promoting children’s learning with families and community members, as well as your challenges and questions. Partnership practitioners learn most from each other, so *let’s hear from you!*